

VZCZCXRO9811
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHRO #1526/01 1381736
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 181736Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4841
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 1407
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 7106
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 1481
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 001526

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/18/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [IT](#)
SUBJECT: PRODI RATCHETS UP RHETORIC ON IRAQ, NO NEW GROUND
ON SUBSTANCE IN EURO-CENTRIC ADDRESS TO ITALIAN SENATE

REF: A) ROME 584 B) ROME 342

ROME 00001526 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Classified by David D. Pearce, Political Minister Counse
lor, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. On May 18, Italian PM-designate Romano Prodi addressed the Italian Senate to lay out his government's political platform. Prodi reiterated his coalition's oft-stated opposition to the war, and said his government would propose to Parliament the return of Italian troops. He stepped up his rhetoric, to jeers and calls of "shame" from Center-Right politicians, calling the war and "occupation of the country" a serious error. On substance, however, he was careful to say that the timing of any withdrawal would be worked out in consultation with all interested parties (i.e., the Iraqi government and allies), in order to guarantee conditions of security. The speech drew heavily from the Union platform. Prodi, as expected, focused heavily on his government's increased emphasis on strengthening ties with the EU and Italy's role in European foreign policy. "It is our intent," he said, "that our national interest and Europe's interest be one and the same thing." He said Italy's relations with the U.S. would remain strong, "but Italy counts -- even in relations with its great ally -- only if it counts in Europe." Prodi said that Italy would be active in the fight against terror through economic, social and political means, and would be prepared to use military force if necessary, but only if legitimized through an international mandate. End summary.

War on Terror and Iraq
- - - - -

¶2. (U) Prodi told the Senate May 18 that terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction were the greatest threats to international security. The war against global terrorism, however, must be fought through economic, social and political means in order to reduce the appeal of radicalism. The war on terror should not infringe on human rights nor curtail civil liberties. Italy would not shy away from military action, but it must be legitimized by the international organizations to which Italy belongs.

¶3. (SBU) Prodi reiterated his opposition to the war in Iraq and Italy's troop presence in Iraq. He claimed that the war had provided terrorism "a new base in Iraq" and added to regional instability. As promised repeatedly during the recent election campaign, he said his government would propose to Parliament the return of Italian troops. Amid

jeers and calls of "shame" from Center-Right politicians, Prodi stepped up his rhetoric, calling the war and "occupation of the country" a serious error. On substance, however, he was careful to say that the timing of any withdrawal would be worked out in consultation with all interested parties (i.e., the Iraqi government and allies), in order to guarantee conditions of security. He added, defensively, that his program did not differ from CR plans (for transitioning the Italian troop presence in Iraq from a military to mainly civilian mission).

Europe the New Focus of Italian Foreign Policy

14. (U) Prodi told the Italian Senate that European unity, integration, political and economic development would be the fundamental framework for the foreign policy of his government. It would work to realign Italy with the leading countries of the EU and present a program to unify EU security, immigration, economic, energy and educational policies. The new government would encourage immediately restarting negotiations on an EU constitution and would encourage strong participation in the 2009 European elections.

Europe as a partner to the U.S.

15. (U) Prodi stated that his emphasis on Europe would not endanger the transatlantic relationship but would enrich the alliance with the U.S. on the basis of mutual respect and dignity. "It is our intent," he said, "that our national interest and Europe's interest be one and the same thing. Italy counts -- even in relations with its great ally -- only if it counts in Europe." He added that he would advocate multilateralism and a strengthened role for the U.N.

ROME 00001526 002.2 OF 002

in determining questions of global security.

16. (C) Comment. Prodi is seeking to walk a fine line between differentiating his government from Berlusconi's while trying to ensure Italian relations with the U.S. remain productive. He repeated his oft-stated criticism of the Iraq war, but on substance was careful to acknowledge the need for coordination on timing with the Iraqi government and allies in order not to guarantee conditions of security. Also noteworthy was the focus on Europe. Prodi made clear, as did his Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema several months ago, that for this government, the road to Washington will lead through Brussels.
SPOGLI